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2020-12

Safarov , N 2020 , Digital (Dis)Engagement in Older Age : Determinants and Outcomes . in
p̃y M Forman , E Laçe j , F Reinprecht & K Sawchuk (eds) , Radical (Dis) E
p̃y Society Religion . Off Campus: Seggau School of Thought , no. 6 , U
Graz , pp. 21-33 .

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/323983>

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Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) hold the promise of improving the quality of life of older people and increasing the accessibility of public services for them. The chapter aims at distinguishing the predictors of ICT increased or decreased use specifically for older adults and outlining the potential outcomes that it can bring. To achieve it, the concept of digital (dis)engagement is viewed in relation to the digital engagement, the concept of digital divides is defined and the literature on digital divides predictors is reviewed. The discussion section states the gaps in literature and possible future research.

Suggested Citation: Safarov, Nuriiar “Digital (Dis)Engagement in Older Age: Determinants and Outcomes.” *Radical (Dis)Engagement: State – Society – Religion (Off Campus: Seggau School of Thought 6)*, edited by Murray Forman, Erlis Haj, Frederick Reinprecht, and Kim Saw, 2020, pp21-33, DOI: 10.25364/25.6:2020.2.

Keywords: Digital divide, older people, digital (dis)engagement, vulnerability, public services

Peer Review: This article was reviewed by the editors and professors of the GUSEGG Summer School

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Engagement in the Digitalization Framework

The concept of engagement of older people has been approached from different angles, such as social, economic, political, or civic engagement (Serrat et al.; Hajek et al.; Loretto and Vickerstaff). During the last decade, various dimensions of this concept have been extensively studied concerning Internet and online participation (Damant et al.; Schreurs et al.)

In the age of increasing digitalization, the Internet constitutes a medium that enables or limits the access to essential goods and services, either opens up new opportunities or narrows them down and hence makes people engage or disengage in one sense or another. Having a connection to the Internet and being able to use it may influence the ability to exercise the fundamental rights of a citizen. For example, online voting systems have been integrated by many governments across Europe and beyond (Manoharan). Various forms of electronic participation (participation) including online discussion forums, electronic polls, and electronic juries, have also been adopted (Manoharan 124). Being able to use the Internet and information and communication technology more generally can determine the level of civic participation (Patton et al.)

Regarding the social aspect of engagement, interpersonal relationships and networks in the contemporary world are intertwined with digital technology in countless ways. For personal communication, people often use WhatsApp and other Internet-based video calling and instant messaging applications. In a broader sense, communication within the social communities, social groups or groups of interest increasingly happens through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter etc. Thanks to the great penetration of technology and the Internet into social life, communication can happen across the distance, which is a substantial benefit for those engaged in ICT. It was studied, that involvement in information technology use enhances social engagement in both formal and informal settings (Kiss et al.). Such an opportunity for higher social engagement is especially relevant for people in their pension age and other potentially vulnerable population groups such as minorities or those with limited mobility (Warschauer).

The aforementioned aspects of older people's engagement are highly related to the extent to which one is involved in ICT use. Differential inclusion of various population groups (including age groups) has been at the focus of attention in many studies on digital inclusion (van Dusen and Helsper; Ragnedda and Muschert; Friedrich). Digital inclusion (Matthews et al.). Digital engagement (J. Kim et al.), technology and Internet usage and acceptance (Garcia et al.; Chou et al.) and so on.

In many of those studies, it was shown that the Internet and ICT use decreases with age

